

Bumiputera Non-Balai Pustaka Novels as a Decolonial Perspective in the Dutch East Indies Era 1900-1932

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Abstract

This paper examines non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera novels from 1900 to 1932, and their aesthetic and ideological characteristics that are relevant to the context of the Dutch East Indies. This study aims (1) to collect non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera novels; (2) contextualize these works as aesthetic and ideological counters to Balai Pustaka's policies; and (3) analyze them as forms of counter-modernity from a decolonial perspective. Using Walter D. Mignolo's theory and a qualitative method, the study identifies works by several Bumiputera non-Balai Pustaka novels in the period and ideological context. The findings show that these texts resisted Balai Pustaka's standardization, articulating local spirituality and left-wing orientations as alternatives to colonial modernity. The decolonial context of these works demonstrates the understanding that aesthetics are not solely assessed in the text but rather based on hegemonic ideology. The aesthetics and ideology of resistance to Western modernity are obscured by the stigmatization of ideology, rather than by assessing the textual aspects.

Keywords: *non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera novels, counter-modernity, decolonial perspective*

Introduction

This paper discusses the existence of novels by non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera authors from 1900 to 1932, which in Balai Pustaka terminology are referred to as *Batjaan Liar* literary works¹. Discussion of these novels is pivotal because literary works that are not included in the literary repertoire of Balai Pustaka², as a Dutch East Indies government institution exercising control both aesthetically and ideologically, represent the context of Indonesia. In fact, in addition to non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera literary works, literary works outside Balai Pustaka publications also represent the context of nationalism. Rakhman (2016) explained that the representation of pre-Indonesian nationalism reflected in the works of Indies authors, namely those of Dutch descent, such as in the works of Ferdinand Wiggers, represents Indies culture, as a reflection of the context of nationalism in the Dutch East Indies, as their homeland.

Non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera works also represent the concept of the nation, just as Indies works in the Dutch East Indies do. This is in line with Pujihartono & Udasmoro (2014) who discuss the contextualization of literary works by non-Balai Pustaka authors that represent pre-

¹ Bumiputera is the term for residents during the Dutch East Indies era

² Balai Pustaka is a publishing and censorship institution founded by the colonial government in the Dutch East Indies.

Indonesian nationalism. Therefore, non-Balai Pustaka works, including those by non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera authors, have counter tendencies to various conditions and policies of the Dutch East Indies government, thus giving birth to a representation of nationalism for the Dutch East Indies, which can be understood as the embryo of Indonesian nationalism. This condition is certainly in line with the explanation Sudibyo (2017), There is ambivalence in the literature of the Indies written by Indo authors in the Dutch East Indies regarding the issue of identity. This certainly makes sense, considering that although Indos felt identity-wise as Westerners, they were not fully recognized by the West and were regarded with suspicion by the East. Therefore, within the space of ambivalence characteristic of postcolonial times, their works represented Dutch East Indies nationalism.

Non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera literature, or in Balai Pustaka terminology, is called *Batjaan Liar*³. As explained by Razif (2005), Taum (2014), and Sulton (2015), The term of *Batjaan Liar* literature is a form of hegemony of the Dutch East Indies government through Balai Pustaka to justify the low value of the works of Bumiputera outside the group of authors of the institution, which represents the context of resistance against the government. Basically, these works were eliminated as *good* literary works according to Balai Pustaka standards, more because these works did not meet Balai Pustaka's literary political standards, which questioned the use of language and ideological issues that were not in line with the wishes of the

Dutch East Indies government. This is logical due to the Dutch East Indies government's implemented linguistic rules. According to Groeneboer (1999), there was a policy of standardizing Dutch for the Dutch community and their descendants and standardizing Malay for the natives in the Dutch East Indies. In this case, the standardization of Malay in question was Riau Malay—under the hegemony of the Dutch East Indies government—was referred to as High Malay due to the role of the Dutch researcher named Adrian van Ophuijsen. Outside the standardized Malay language, it was referred to as Low Malay, which essentially was a *lingua franca* in the archipelago; in the Eastern context was called *Melayu Pasar* explained by Foulcher (2000); Sulisty (2018); and Sulisty & Sartika (2020)⁴.

Based on the portrayals, it elucidates the condition of non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera literature that positions the pivot adequately in Indonesian literary history. Balai Pustaka's literary politics hegemonizes the literary context in the Dutch East Indies. This context endures in the history of literature in Indonesia—where *good* literature is the works published in Balai Pustaka—and places it as the forerunner of Indonesian literature, with the support of Indonesian literary critics such as Teeuw (1986), Rosidi (1988), Sumardjo (1992), Mujiyanto & Fuadi (2014), and Nugraha & Suyitno (2019). This condition certainly legitimizes the terminology of *good literature* and *Batjaan Liar* (wild literature); born from the *shackles* of Balai Pustaka's hegemony over their interests, including strengthening

³ Wild reading/low-level literature

⁴ Called *Melayu Pasar*/Malay Market because this language is a non-formal term and normally used

for economical transaction in the Malay Archipelago (Indonesia, Malaysia, & Singapore)

their position in the Dutch East Indies, which, in Mignolo's terminology, is known as re-westernization (2011), a strengthening way of Western supremacy in colonial/Eastern countries. Meanwhile, in the opposite context, de-westernization relates to the East's counter against Western objectification. This is based on their local sources, including aspects of their history, present, and future. They cannot seek legitimacy to be recognized as equals to the West, as the East has its own ways, language, knowledge, and identity. This context, related to Quijano, (2007); Linda T. Smith, (1999); and Bhabra, (2014), reflected postcolonial and decolonial conditions.

In relation to these studies, the context of non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera literature in the Dutch East Indies era tends to examine the issue of critical representation as a form of ideological resistance and the context of fragmented identity as a characteristic of establishment postcolonial society. This research offers a novelty related to decolonial criticism, as proposed by Mignolo (2011) Decolonialize does not mean going beyond postcolonialism; it just requires a foundation in postcolonial conditions. In this case, relating to conditions of hybridity and ambivalence, including the use of non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera works as representations of social criticism during the Dutch East Indies era as characteristics of postcolonial conditions, this study is an attempt to develop counter-knowledge to these conditions, which are also reflected in literary works. Furthermore, Mignolo (2011) explained that decolonial criticism is based on two aspects, namely the reorientation of Left and spirituality-locality, which are characteristics of ideology in counter-knowledge and the

hegemony of humanity, namely Western modernity as the ideology of colonialism.

Literature Review

About the Bumiputera non-Balai Pustaka's novels, Farid & Razif, (2008) explained in a postcolonial context, the works of Bumiputera non-Balai Pustaka, which were categorized as *Batjaan Liar* by the Dutch East Indies government, represent the antithesis of Indonesian literature. On the one hand, these works represent resistance to the Dutch East Indies government because they were written by left-wing activists, but on the other hand, the ideology they offer has socialist tendencies. In this case, the works of *Batjaan Liar* tend to experience a fragmentation of identity, because on the one hand they represent the resistance of the people in the Dutch East Indies, but on the other hand the presence of the authors and the trends and forms of literary works they produce represent the West. This context is certainly identical to the characteristics of post-colonial society, in the sense that on the one hand, they continue to maintain their existence as Easterners, while on the other hand, they adopt or, in Bhabha's terminology, exist in an ambiguous space between the two. In the context of sociology, Sulton (2022); (2015); (2020); and Sulton et al., (2022) demonstrated that *Batjaan Liar*'s literary works represent resistance and political propaganda against the Dutch East Indies government, including criticism of the *cultuurtseksel* policy relating to sugar cane cultivation in the Dutch East Indies, which was also a concern for Mas Marco

Kartodikromo⁵. In the context of ideological representation, the works of Bumiputera non-Balai Pustaka show significance in the context of the nation, which can be interpreted as pre-Indonesian nationalism. Wiyatmi (2003) explained the contextualization of nationalism reflected in pre-independence works, one of which is in the works of non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera, as reflected in Mas Marco Kartodikromo's work on ideological representation in these works. The research shows that forms of resistance against the Dutch East Indies government as a representation of colonialism tend to be considered a form of nationalism. This is like Sudibyo (2017c) in its relevance to postcolonial novels in the Dutch East Indies, which is inclined to identity biases creating ruptures in in-between spaces in the works. General research on non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera literature, which is synonymous with *Batjaan Liar* as a form of Balai Pustaka hegemony. The characteristics of postcolonial studies and the relevance of decolonial studies as a new approach to non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera works will be explained, as a counter to Western modernity represented in the postcolonial conditions in the Dutch East Indies. This is because decoloniality is a form of criticism of postcolonial conditions dominated by Western perspectives. Meanwhile, the decolonial orientation is a form of counter to this, based on spirituality-locality and a reorientation of the Left.

Research Method

This research is descriptive-qualitative, which is explained by Creswell

(2018) qualitative research related to social and cultural phenomena. Related to the methodological context, Faruk (2012) explains that the research method is related to the interpretation of data based on theoretical aspects and research hypotheses on information that is not directly raised by the data. Meanwhile, in the context of research methods, as in Faruk's opinion, information related to data will be analyzed based on the theory in this study, related to the assumptions of Walter D. Mignolo's Decolonial theory. The data sources in this study are based on non-Balai Pustaka literary works from the Dutch East Indies era, between 1900 and 1932. Purposive sampling was used in this study to determine the material objects. The research steps in this study are as follows: 1) reading the literary context of the Dutch East Indies era and determining the classification of non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera literary works; 2) describing the ideological and aesthetic context as characteristics of non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera literary works; and 3) describe the decolonial context, especially in the counter aspect to modernity in the Dutch East Indies, with the support of other research and non-textual literary data. The data analysis technique in this study is to interpret the research data, namely, related to the parts of the novel that represent the decolonial context. This will be supported by contextual data on intellectual movements during the Dutch East Indies era, in the political context of the authors, with Mignolo's theory as the framework for this study.

Results and Discussion

⁵ *Cultuurtzelsel* is the implementation of the forced cultivation system in the Dutch East Indies in the period 1840-1870 by the colonial government.

Critic Toward Modernity: Decolonial Perspective

In relation to the context of modernity, Mignolo (2011) explains that the concept of "modernity" is a complex narrative whose starting point is Europe; a narrative that constructs Western civilization by celebrating its achievements while simultaneously hiding the dark side of "coloniality." Coloniality, in other words, is an integral part of modernity because there is no modernity without coloniality. Therefore, the common expressions "global modernity/globalism/globalization" imply "global coloniality" in the sense that the matrix of colonial power is owned and contested: if there is no modernity without coloniality, then there will be no global modernity without global coloniality. Consequently, decolonial thought and action emerged and developed since the 16th century, as a response to the oppression and imperialism of modern European ideals projected and imposed on the non-European world. Furthermore, Mignolo (2011) explains that globalization, as a Western product, has two sides: the narrative of modernity and the logic of coloniality. These narratives have evoked different responses; some are described as de-Westernization and others as decoloniality. Post nationalism in the West signifies the end of nationalism, while in the non-European world it signifies the beginning of a new era in which the concept of nationalism serves to reclaim identity as the foundation of sovereignty. Mignolo (2011) describes this global landscape as a "decolonial cosmopolitanism" that occurred between the 16th and 21st centuries. Hidden behind the rhetoric of modernity, economic practices disregard the inherently negligible human life, and knowledge justifies racism.

Understandably, the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of colonialism are inseparable. This means that the various assumptions of the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of colonialism, as born by the West, under certain conditions, will present a new perspective with an orientation to civilize non-modern entities, thus paving the way for objectification and domination. This context is related to various policies implemented by the West in colonial territories, including the Dutch East Indies. Balai Pustaka's policy, by presenting rules based on the perspective of modernity, on the one hand, has a colonial logic by eliminating the existence of locality from their perspective (Western modernity), as is the case with issues of ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations, hostility, and sexuality that are the main axes of non-Balai Pustaka works. On the one hand, these rules protect the interests of the colonial government from various criticisms made possible by non-Balai Pustaka groups. On the other hand, this has the impact of the presence of auto-criticism of the culture and customs of the authors themselves, with an orientation to weaken and negate aspects of their locality. This is in line with the modern way of thinking to negate things they consider past, in the hope of following modernity. This is because locality, including spirituality, often interferes with the interests of materialistic modernity.

The Mapping of Bumiputera Non-Balai Pustaka's Novels in the Dutch East Indies Era

This section will describe the results and discussion of the research related to the condition of non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera novels in the 1900-1932 era in the Dutch East Indies. It will describe the creative aspects related to the names of authors,

titles of works, years of publication, and publication of these works. In this context, it will also discuss the contextualization of the work with the identity of the author, so that it can explain that the work is included in the category of non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera works. In the next section, the aesthetic and ideological conditions represented in non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera novels will be described. In this case, the textual conditions of non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera works will be compared with the aesthetic and ideological conditions in the standard works published

by Balai Pustaka. The aspects that will be examined are, of course, related to the linguistic and ideological aspects in both categories of literary works. Meanwhile, in the final part of the research, non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera novels, which in this research hypothesis are part of literary works that are ideologically at odds with the conception of modernity as another face of colonialism, will be described in terms of textual conditions that these works are counter knowledge and identity to modernity as one of the pillars of colonialism.

Table 1. *List of non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera novels from the 1900-1932 period*

Authors	Title	Publishing/Media	Years
Tirto Adhie Soerjo	<i>Tjerita Njai Ratna</i>	Medan Prijaji (Pers)	1909
	<i>Beli Bini Orang</i>	Medan Prijaji (Pers)	1909
	<i>Boesono</i>	Medan Prijaji (Pers)	1912
	<i>Tjerita Wajang Poerwa Bagian I</i>	Soenda Berita (Pers)	1904
	<i>Penipoe Tertipoe (Short Stories)</i>	Soenda Berita (Pers)	1903
	<i>Pereboetan Seorang Gadis</i>	Pembrita Betawi (Pers)	1902
Marco Kartodikromo	<i>Student Hidjo</i>	Boekhandel Marsman & Stroink	1919
	<i>Matahariyah</i>	Sinar Hindia (Pers)	1919
	<i>Mata Gelap</i>	Petaba Press (Repro Versi)	1914
Semaoen	<i>Hikajat Kadiroen</i>	Bentang Budaya (Repro Versi)	1920
Moechtar Boechary	<i>Moeslimah</i>	Bintang Islam	1923
W.R. Soepratman	<i>Perawan Desa</i>	Sinar Hidoep	1929
F.D.J. Pangemanan	<i>Tjerita Si Tjonat</i>	Tjoe Toei Yang	1900
	<i>Tjerita Rossina</i>	Bataviaschi: Snelpersdrukkerij Kho Tjeng Bie & Co	1903/1910

Based on the data table, the publication of literary works by groups outside Balai Pustaka often began with periodicals such as Pembrita Betawi, Soenda Berita, and Medan Prijaji. In addition, works that did not represent the Dutch East Indies government were published by private publishers, many of which were owned by Chinese entrepreneurs. In his explanation, Maier (2006) stated that printing plants were publishing houses, combining the production, publication, and distribution of

periodicals with those of books, and producing Dutch, Malay, and Javanese texts on the same presses, with the same type faces. There were lending libraries where not only manuscripts but also printed materials could be rented for a couple of cents. There were shops, slowly growing in number, in the big cities of Java, Sumatra, and the Peninsula, where books in various languages were available. That is the skeleton of facts that can be deduced from the announcements of Lange & Co, Albrecht & Rusche, Landsdrukkerij, Kolff

& Co, Van Dorp & Co, Ogilvie & Co, and Alex. Regensburg in Batavia, Buning in Djogjakarta, Grimberg & Co in Soerabaja, and Bisschop, Van Dorp & Co, Asperen van der Velde, and Yap Goan Ho in Semarang. In another research, published in the Dutch East Indies era, by a non-governmental organization (*Tionghoa Peranakan/descent*), explained by Tirta Suwondo., Herry Mardianto (1997); Maryono, (2021); and Handayani & Arifin, (2023).

The Condition of Non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera Novels in the Dutch East Indies Era

Based on these data, there are 14 literary works, especially in the romance (novel) genre, that were produced by Bumiputera authors in the non-Balai Pustaka category in the 1900-1932 era. However, of course, there are still many other works, including those written in regional languages in the Dutch East Indies. This is as stated by Iskandar (1942), which explains the existence of Balai Pustaka in publishing regional language works in the period 1914-1919, consisting of Javanese, Malay, Sundanese, and Madurese⁶.

Sulton (2020) discussed other works by Mas Marco Kartodikromo, including the work entitled *Rasa Merdeka: Hikajat Soedjanmo* under the pen name Soemantri (1924), which is thought to be another name for Mas Marco Kartodikromo. Rosida Erowati & Ahmad Bahtiar, (2011) explained that one of Mas Marco Kartodikromo's works *Babad Tanah Jawi* (1924), and some short stories translated into English by Tickell (1981). In addition to the form of romances (novels and short stories), Mas Marco

Kartodikromo also wrote a collection of poetry entitled *Syair Sama Rasa dan Sama Rata* (1917) and *Syair Rempah Rempah* (1918). Thus, as explained previously, in addition to the works presented in the table, there are certainly other works that have not been adequately identified, both works written in *Melayu Pasar* and in regional languages, with various genres of literary works in the Dutch East Indies.

Regarding the creative process of non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera novels, their existence was constrained by various Dutch East Indies government policies, including those concerning ideology and language. In this regard, the Dutch East Indies government exercised control over reading materials in the Dutch East Indies, referring to the reading policy in India, which was not regulated by special supervision and had an impact on the ideological awareness of reading materials for the younger generation in India. As stated by Sumardjo (2004), the emergence of public awareness in India of British colonialism was caused by free access to reading materials. Thus, as reflected in the ideological aspects of non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera works, the restrictions imposed by the Dutch East Indies government referred to the Nota Rinkes regulations, which were related to the political interests of the Dutch East Indies government in maintaining its political position in the Dutch East Indies. This is in line with Kratz (2000), who explained that the Dutch East Indies government intended Balai Pustaka to be the sole institution responsible for the publication and distribution of literary works, including books, in the Dutch East Indies. The Rinkes Memorandum

⁶ Several local languages in the Dutch East Indies/Indonesia

stipulated, among other things: 1) Neutrality on religious issues; 2) No promotion of violence; and 3) No obscene content. Sulistyono (2016) explained that—in addition to the rules in the Rinkes Note—Balai Pustaka's works must use Riau Malay and not concern on the political issues of the government.

The condition of non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera works was certainly unclear due to various policies of the Dutch East Indies government. Of course, besides the dominance of Balai Pustaka as a Dutch East Indies government institution that received various supporting facilities from the government, and the condition of literary scholars who also supported this hegemony, another factor was the large number of non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera authors who received legal cases, either due to their political activities in opposing various Dutch East Indies government policies directly, or through *pressdelicks* on the writings they produced⁷. Achdian (2023) explained the political movement of Semaon (the author of the novel *Hikajat Kadiroen*) in the left movement in the Dutch East Indies, which began with a position as secretary of S.I. Surabaya at the age of 14. In addition, Semaon was also a member of VSTV (*Vereniging van Spoor-en Tramwegpersoneel*)⁸, which was an organization of railway and tram workers in the Dutch East Indies. In addition, at the age of 18, Semaon became secretary of ISDV (*Indische Sociaal Democratische Vereeniging*) Surabaya city with Hartogs as the chairman of the Dutch East Indies

socialist democratic organization⁹, and the leader of *Sjariat Islam afdeling* Semarang city with its great figure, Sneevliet, who brought the ideology to the Dutch East Indies¹⁰. The political conditions in the Dutch East Indies made many writers with left ideology who always resisted the Dutch East Indies government face criminal consequences. Chambert-Loir (2018) explained that Mas Marco Kartodikromo, a left-wing activist and writer (in the non-Balai Pustaka category, of course), eventually died in exile. The conditions of Mas Marco Kartodikromo's resistance and his works, as reflected in the explanation Hartanto (2017), related to the organizational activities, literary works, and thoughts of Mas Marco Kartodikromo in the context of the movement to defend his nation against the domination and hegemony of the colonial government, including in the citizenship law, positioning the Natives who were born since their ancestors, as foreign citizens in their homeland.

Bumiputera's Novels: Counter Towards Balai Pustaka Aesthetic and Ideological Order

The condition of non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera novels represents an aesthetic and ideological context that is at odds with Balai Pustaka's standard as a form of literary politics in the Dutch East Indies. This condition can be observed in the aesthetic (linguistic) and ideological representations within these works. Meanwhile, the ideological aspect of non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera works can be

⁷ laws to regulate writing in newspapers and literary works created by the colonial government

⁸ Association for Train and Tram Worker in the Dutch East Indies era

⁹ ISDV is a first party in the Dutch East Indies with a democratic and socialist ideology

¹⁰ The Semarang branch of Islamic Sjariat (law) is an organization that combines Islam and socialism, which is different from Islamic Sjariat in the Dutch East Indies in general because it only has an Islamic ideology.

observed with Balai Pustaka's standard through the *Nota Rinkes* regulations. As previously explained, Balai Pustaka's standard regulations through the *Nota Rinkes* regulate the issue of not offending religion, not offending hostility, and not touching on issues of sexuality. On the other hand, Balai Pustaka's standards also require published literary works to be written in Riau Malay as the standard language for Indigenous people, and not using *Melayu Pasar*, as explained in the explanation by Groeneboer (1999). The success of the colonial government's linguistic policy, one of which was realized in the standardization of Riau/High Malay as the embryo of the Indonesian language, which was declared through the Youth Pledge in 1928, as explained by Foulcher (2000).

As explained previously, one of the characteristics of the aesthetic condition of non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera works is that they are written in Market Malay, which was the lingua franca in the archipelago, including for trade, which in the terminology of the Dutch East Indies government was called Low Malay as a binary opposition to the term High Malay, namely Riau Malay. In this case, Market Malay, which was the lingua franca in the archipelago, contained various linguistic elements such as Javanese, Dutch, and other language sources, so that this condition was not in line with the program of purifying the Dutch language for the Dutch community and their descendants and the standardization of Malay for the natives in the Dutch East Indies. This context was certainly not in line with the conception of the greatness of the West as a great civilization, as put forward by Sudibyo (2002), the West is the source of knowledge and high civilization, and

considers the East as the Other. This context is relevant to what Mignolo (2011) had stated; in essence, the birth of Western modernity, marked by the Renaissance era at the end of the 15th century, made the World that was initially unexplored, conquered by the West, and divided it, without permission, including classifying it without consent. This included carrying out hegemony and standardization of knowledge based on their point of view. Related to the representation of aesthetic and ideological counters in non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera novels, among others, is reflected in the *Matahariah* novel.

"Ik? Ik ben Parlesiene, maar ik houd veel van Pecel. Heh, Pecel zoo lekker!" Kata Matahariah dan tingkah lakunya menunjukkan bahwa dia suka sekali makanan cara Jawa.

"Das eet je oog cabe?" Tanya Student Muda.

"Naluurlijk!" Menjawab nonya ayu.

"Je ben een echte Indische hoor?" Kata pula Soemoro sambil memotong rotinya yang didapat dari nyonyah rumah.

"Ik hoop, dat Ik een Javaansche worden" menjawab Matahariah dan mukanya yang manis melihatan tamunya.

"Is dat werkelijk waar?" Tanya student dengan tertawa.

"Dus wil je Raden Ayu worden?" Tanya Pula student.

"Hoet niet Raden Ayu, als Ik maar Javaansche ben" berkata pula Nyonya rumah dan tertawa." Kartodikromo (1919)

("Me? I'm Parlesiene, but I love Pecel a lot. Heh, Pecel is so delicious!") Matahariah's words and behavior show that she really likes Javanese food.

"Do you eat your Chilli seeds?" Ask Young Students.

"Of course!" Answering the beautiful lady.

"You are a real Indies, you know?"

Soemoro said while cutting the bread he got from the hostess.

"I hope I will become Javanese," Matahariah replied, and her sweet face looked at her guest.

"Is that really true?" asked the student with a laugh.

"So, you want to become Raden Ayu?" Ask the student.

“Don't worry, Raden Ayu, if I am Javanese,” said the hostess and laughed.) Kartodikromo (1919)

Based on this quote, it can be understood that the aesthetic and ideological conditions of the *Matahariyah* novel do not align with Balai Pustaka's standard, both in the context of the use of linguistic aspects and in the ideological representation within the work. The linguistic conditions used in the novel are Market/Low Malay, with a mixture of various sources from other languages, such as Dutch, Malay, and Javanese. This context is certainly not in line with Groeneboer K. (1999), related to the colonial government's linguistic policy to standardize Dutch and Malay. Related to the condition of Riau/High Malay as a language standardized by the Dutch East Indies colonial government, Sary (2018) discusses the differences in verb forms between Riau/High Malay and Market/Low Malay, in addition to being related to the linguistic elements of Market Malay, which reflect the mixture of linguistic aspects within it. Counter knowledge and ideology in the novel show that in the context of humanity. The East, namely the Dutch East Indies, has values based on its historicity with local tribes and customs like Java and others, does not have to be entirely occupied with the standardization of Western modernity. Represented in the conversation between Matahariah and Soemoro related to food, language, longing for the homeland of the Indies, as well as related to aspects of humanity, especially in Matahariyah's view of being a Javanese woman. Marco Kartodikromo, through his novel, demonstrates that humans are equal in terms of humanity. Furthermore,

Matahariyah, a Westerner who aspires to be a Javanese, represents the height of Eastern civilization.

Bumiputera Novels: Representation of Decolonial Perspective in the Dutch East Indies

About the representation of counter knowledge and modernity in non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera novels, this is reflected, among other things, in the novel *Mata Gelap* by Mas Marco Kartodikromo (1914). The novel portrays the conditions of modernity in the Dutch East Indies, which were shaped by Western modernity, as evident in the practice of singing experienced by Retna Permata and the realities of free association and alcoholism that characterized the lives of people in the Dutch East Indies. In this case, it is similar to the statement of Bhabha (1994). In the context of *Mimikry* and *Moochery*, representations of the East often imitate the West, although they will never be identical to the West, and this can be interpreted as an insult to the West. In the context of the Dutch East Indies, the condition of literature in the context of the third space as a postcolonial characteristic in Bhabha's thought, presents a condition of uncanny and ambivalence that is not only experienced by the Indo category, but also by the Indigenous people, as explained by Sudibyo (2017a).

It can be understood that the influence of Western modernity has become a significant part of the lives of people in the Dutch East Indies, including in the city of Semarang, as the main setting of the novel *Mata Gelap*. It can be understood that, especially Retna Permata's position as a Njai from a Dutch husband, of course, she lives a free Western lifestyle, including taking her boyfriend to the house named Subriga, and this condition is also known to

her maid. This context shows that Western modernity has a significant impact on society in the Dutch East Indies, including in the context of Western cultural elements such as Rotschild cigarettes, Boundewijn, and Brandy, which are certainly not part of the representation of local culture. This context shows harmony with the thinking of Sudibyo (2017b), which relates to the Eastern ambivalence in adapting to the living conditions of Dutch society, as reflected in novels from the Dutch East Indies era. Mas Marco critiques the presence of modernity in the Dutch East Indies, evident in the practice of *Njai* and in other representations of Western culture. This context, related to Hellwig, (1994); Foulcher, (2006); Murwani, (2013); Dewojati, (2017); and Dewojati & Arifin, (2024) focusing on the effect of the postcolonial condition on the Dutch East Indies society. As for the criticism of modernity reflected in the *Mata Gelap* novel (1914).

“Wat wil je hebben, Lieve?” tanya Retna Permata dengan bahasa Belanda, sambil memegang Pundak Subriga dan melihatkan mukanya.

“Asal dikasih, semua aku suka”, sahut Subriga dengan tersenyum, dan mengambil sigaret Rotschild yang terletak di meja cuci muka.

“Zit maar hier Lieve,” kata pula Retna Permata sambil menarik kursi rotan yang dekat lampu duduk. Subriga terus duduk di kursi rotan yang ditarikanya, dan memasang sigaret Rotschild yang terlalu harum baunya.

“Geef mij maar brandewijn, Engel?” begitulah Subriga minta kepada Retna Permata, yang baru berdiri di sisi kursi tempat duduk.

Retna permata segra mengambil botol brandi, dituangkan di gelas-kecil. “Met zoda of niet Lieve?” tanya tuan putri sambil memegang air Belanda.

“Met zoda ook gud, zonder ook gud. Na sudah zonder zoda”. Sahut Subriga mengambil gelas kecil, yang sudah berisi Brandi dan meminumnya. (Kartodikromo: 1914)

(“What do you want, dear?” Retna Permata asked in Dutch, while holding Subriga's shoulder and looking at his face.

“As long as you give me one, I like everything,” Subriga replied with a smile and took the Rotschild cigarette that was on the washstand.

“Just sit here, dear,” Retna Permata said while pulling a rattan chair near the table lamp.

Subriga continued to sit in the rattan chair he had pulled out, and lit a Rotschild cigarette that smelled too good.

“Give me some brandy, Angel?” That's what Subriga asked Retna Permata, who had just stood at the side of the chair.

Retna Permata took the bottle of brandy quickly and poured it into a small glass. “With soda or not, Dear?” asked the princess while holding the Dutch water.

“It's good with soda, but it's also good without it. It's not so good without soda.”. Subriga replied, taking a small glass, which already contained brandy, and drank it.) (Kartodikromo, 1914)

The use of Dutch in the conversation between Retna Permata and Subriga demonstrates Mas Marco Kartodikromo's humanitarian critique in the work. He criticized the use of Dutch by Eastern entities, as a linguistic form that was considered commonplace by the Dutch East Indies community. Explained by Hartanto (2017) Mas Marco has a serious concern about the linguistic aspect in the Dutch East Indies, especially in the use of Market Malay, which is the lingua franca in the Indies and represents the concept of the nation, and he rejects the existence of the use of Riau Malay, which is a language created by the government for their ideology, as explained by Salam & Zamzuri, (2023). Relevant to cross-border and ideology, Sulistyio et al., (2025) The condition of ideology, reflected in the Dutch East Indies literature and context.

It can be observed that the criticism of modernity put forward by Mas Marco Kartodikromo in his work is related to the condition of moral decadence due to the influence of Western modernity, with the imitation of Western styles and tastes by Bumiputera entities in the Dutch East

Indies. This condition elucidates that it is of the same type as the opinion proposed by Mignolo (2011); (2012); and (2021), explaining the critique of de-westernization, non-Western entities have historical sources, memories, languages, and local knowledge that are similar to their living conditions, both for the present and for their future. These contexts are not in a condition to *gain* equal recognition by the West, but remain themselves, and *move* in other directions according to their conditions, within the Western framework, or recognition by the West. Explained by Sulisty, Hary; Faruk; & Sudiby (2025) spirituality as another option for decolonial context in the Dutch East Indies, reflected in non-Balai Pustaka novels. This condition is characteristic of non-Balai Pustaka novels from the period 1900-1932, as a representation of decolonial criticism of various ideologies of modernity presented by the colonial government in the Dutch East Indies era. As Sulisty, (2024) explained that, decolonial critique argues against antihumanism a subset of posthumanism, that emerged as a result of modernity, including in the context of the Dutch East Indies. The presence of modernity, which constituted an artificial perspective for society, displaced local spiritual values and devalued the humanity of the Dutch East Indies people from the perspective of Western humanism.

Conclusion

Non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera novels in the period 1900-1932, reflect the contextualization of the authors' thoughts towards the conditions in the Dutch East Indies. In the context of creativity, non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera novels are divided into two classifications, namely works with a Left ideological context, such as in the works of Mas Marco

Kartodikromo and Semaoen, and works with ideological content of spirituality-locality, such as the works of Tirto Adhie Soerjo and Moechtar Boecharj. Meanwhile, the works of F. D. J. Pangemanan and W. R. Soepratman, represent postcolonial conditions (the space between), because on the one hand, they use Market/Low Malay which is considered a representation of the language of resistance in the Dutch East Indies, but on the other hand, they represent the ideology of modernity which is the same type as the Western view in the perspective of Balai Pustaka.

The aesthetic and ideological representation of non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera novels is based on two aspects. First, as discussed previously, non-Balai Pustaka works use Market/Low Malay, which is considered non-standard, and represents resistance against the Dutch East Indies government, especially since the government has made a policy of standardizing Dutch for the Dutch community and their descendants in the Dutch East Indies, as well as standardizing Malay (High/Riau) for the Indigenous community. In addition to not affirming these linguistic policies, the linguistic conditions in Market/Low Malay, which consists of various linguistic elements, on the one hand create problems for Western representations to understand the language and on the other hand, as a postcolonial characteristic, the language shows mimicry and at the same time mockery, especially in the use of Dutch vocabulary in it. Second, these works contain an ideology of resistance, which is certainly not in line with Balai Pustaka's rules regarding the prohibition of immoral content, hostility, and offending religion/race.

In the decolonial context, non-Balai Pustaka Bumiputera novels, the ideology of Left reorientation and Spirituality-Locality. This context is certainly relevant to the conditions in the Dutch East Indies, both related to the trend of intellectual movements that were influenced by Left ideologies such as ISDV, S.I., and the involvement of other movement figures with these ideologies. On the other hand, the contextualization of Spirituality-Locality is also based on countering the issue of other identities as representations of the West, namely Christianity, so that Left organizations can merge with Islamic spirituality and Eastern locality in general, and this becomes a characteristic of the Left reorientation in the Dutch East Indies, which is different from the transnational Left ideology.

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